



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
May 6, 2004

For More Information Contact:
Dawn Mayer
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4533
E-mail: drmayer@state.nd.us

Bike Safety Month Observed in May

BISMARCK, N.D. – Head injury is the leading cause of death in bike crashes, according to Dawn Mayer, health educator with the North Dakota Department of Health. To highlight the importance of safe bike riding, Bike Safety Month is observed nationwide in May.

“National Bicycle Safety Month is a good time to remind all bike riders that the first and most important step in bicycle safety is wearing a helmet and wearing it correctly,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “Because we know helmets are the single most effective safety device available to reduce these injuries and deaths, everyone – adults and children – need to take action and wear helmets.”

According to the National Safe Kids Campaign, 70 percent of children ages 5 to 14 (27.7 million) ride bicycles. This age group rides 50 percent more than the average bicyclist and accounts for about 21 percent of all bike-related deaths and nearly half of all bike-related injuries. According to the North Dakota Department of Transportation, between 1994 and 2003, one child younger than 18 died and 636 were injured in bicycle collisions that involved a motor vehicle. (These statistics do not include injuries resulting from crashes in which no motor vehicle was involved.) Safe Kids estimates that if 85 percent of all children wore helmets when riding bike for one year, the lifetime medical cost savings could total between \$109 million and \$142 million, and approximately 75 percent of fatal head injuries could be prevented.

"Research shows that properly-worn bike helmets can reduce the risk of serious head and brain injury by as much as 85 percent," Mayer said. "Starting the helmet habit with children at an early age increases their chances of wearing a helmet when they are older."

To decrease the chances of injury and death, the Department of Health urges the public to teach children to wear bike helmets and to wear them correctly. Because getting children to wear helmets is not always an easy task, the department offers the following tips:

- Let your child help pick out the helmet.
- Make sure the helmet fits correctly. Get professional advice about adjusting the helmet to your child's head. A helmet that does not fit correctly most likely won't be worn.
- Explain to your child why a helmet is important.
- Help your child practice putting on the helmet until they are able to buckle the straps easily.
- Always insist your child wear a helmet. Make the rule – no helmet, no ride. Anyone can get hurt anywhere at any time.
- When riding bikes with their children, adults should set a good example by wearing helmets.
- Praise your child each time he or she wears a helmet.
- Begin helmet habits with the first tricycle or bicycle, it may become a habit as your child grows.
- Encourage others in your environment to buy helmets for their children.
- Making helmets common is the best way to decrease the feeling of being different.
- Remember that a helmet is meant to withstand one crash – after that it should be replaced.

For more information about bike safety and how to fit a bike helmet correctly, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1).

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